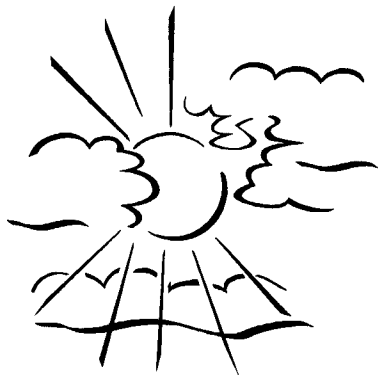


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***Important story at this spot**

Articles in Today's Clips

Tuesday, February 7, 2006

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Tuesday, February 07, 2006

Federal budget cuts to hurt Mich. poor Bush allots \$50M for cleaning up Great Lakes; Granholtz says state can't afford more cutbacks.

Deb Price and Alison Bethel / Detroit News Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON -- President Bush's proposed 2007 budget released Monday would slash tens of millions of dollars from numerous programs in Michigan, including \$25.5 million for block grants aimed at housing and job training for the poor.

The president also would take \$12 million from enforcement of court-ordered child support payments and \$13 million from vocational educational grants.

Not everything got the ax, however. Bush called for ramping up federal research into advanced fuels for motor vehicles. And he requested \$71 million for the Great Lakes, including \$50 million to clean up toxic sites.

Granholtz administration officials and Democratic members of Michigan's Congressional delegation expressed dismay, but Bush's allies in Congress praised the president's effort to shrink the burgeoning federal deficit.

"The president's budget cuts are broad and deep, ranging from vital job creation, worker protection and state homeland security to vital support for our manufacturers and most vulnerable citizens," said Liz Boyd, spokeswoman for Democratic Gov. Jennifer Granholm. "On top of nearly \$40 billion in cuts passed by Congress last week, Michigan can't afford the president's plan."

Rep. Dave Camp, R-Midland, said Bush's proposal to make tax cuts permanent will help stimulate businesses.

"The budget proposed by the president contains several measures to make our country, and especially Michigan manufacturers, more competitive in the global economy," Camp said. Bush's \$2.7 trillion spending plan cuts numerous social programs including Medicaid and Medicare, and increases spending on Homeland Security and the military.

The president says his budget will cut the federal deficit in half by 2009 by, for example, reducing the growth in spending on entitlement programs by \$65 billion over five years and terminating or scaling back 141 programs.

But the cutbacks come as Michigan struggles with job losses and an increasingly sour economy. Later this week, Granholm is expected to propose a state budget for the coming fiscal year that may require \$500 million in spending cuts to align with expected revenue.

Granholtz officials said other proposed federal spending cuts that would hurt the state include: \$5 million less for preventative public health activities.

\$18 million less for programs to provide temporary foster care for abused or neglected children.

\$11 million less to control drugs and crime.

\$2 million less to pay for jailing illegal immigrants.

A loss of food stamps to 25,500 residents due to a change in eligibility rules. And 85,000 residents, mostly low-income seniors, no longer would receive food packages.

To meet the goal Bush set in his State of the Union address of reducing by 75 percent the amount of oil the United States imports from the Middle East, he called for a 22 percent increase in research funding for cleaner energy, such as solar and wind as well as hydrogen and next-generation ethanol power for cars.

For hydrogen research, Bush proposes \$196 million, up from the estimated \$155 million for 2006 and double the \$96 million spent in 2005.

Similarly, Bush's request of \$120 million for "cellulosic" ethanol research -- to produce natural fuel from plant waste matter such as corn stalks and switch grass -- is up from \$91 million in the 2006 fiscal year and double the \$54 million in the 2005 budget.

"This certainly is a good step," said Brett Smith, assistant director of the Center for Automotive Research. "That is a pretty strong investment by the federal government to create new markets ... In terms of the auto industry, they are greatly appreciative of anything that encourages these technologies," Smith added.

The president calls for \$166 million -- a \$17 million decrease from 2006 -- for the vehicle technologies program. This federal program supports the FreedomCAR and 21st Century Truck partnership for research into materials needed for hybrid and fuel cell vehicles, such as lightweight materials, electronic power control and electric drive motors, and advanced energy storage devices. But, auto interests are expected to ask Congress for additional funds.

On the Great Lakes, environmentalists were pleased by the president's request for Congress to fully fund the Great Lakes Legacy Act, which sends federal money to clean up the most-polluted sites in the waters. The White House noted the president is calling for \$20 million more than in the 2006 budget.

But environmentalists said he didn't go far enough to address the range of threats to the Great Lakes that a presidential task force in December said would require \$20 billion to reverse damage caused by sewage overruns, invasive species and wetlands loss in addition to toxic sediment sites.

"You can't fully fund one program and then hope the Great Lakes comprehensively will be brought back to health," said Cameron Davis, executive director of the Alliance for the Great Lakes, "On any given day, there are a number of threats, and the Legacy Act only addresses one of them. The budget proposal is a betrayal of trust."

You can reach Deb Price at (202) 662-8736 or dprice@detnews.com.

Michigan impact

President Bush's budget plan would mean:

\$25.5 million less in grants to help the poor with jobs, housing, food and heating.

Cutting 25,500 residents off food stamps.

An additional \$50 million to clean up toxic sites in Great Lakes.

\$120 million in ethanol research.

Michigan winners, losers in president's budget

Tuesday, February 07, 2006

By Sarah Kellogg

Washington Bureau/MLIVE

WASHINGTON -- Michigan's got its share of winners and losers in President Bush's \$2.7 trillion budget proposal for 2007.

Released Monday, the president's budget would increase federal spending by 2.3 percent between 2006 and 2007, while proposing sharp reductions in or the elimination of 141 federal programs.

"These efforts to restrain the growth in mandatory spending are vital, not just for our near-term deficit reduction efforts, but especially for the long term," said Joshua Bolten, director of the Office of Management and Budget. While Michigan's federal funding would rise from \$10 billion in 2006 to \$10.2 billion in 2007, the budget also includes substantial cuts in popular and important programs.

Michigan Democrats cried foul after reviewing the massive, four-volume budget. If approved by Congress, it would take effect Oct. 1.

"The national budget is more than just numbers on a page, the budget is a true reflection of our nation's values and priorities," said Michigan Democratic Sen. Debbie Stabenow. "Unfortunately, President Bush has again presented Congress with a budget full of misplaced priorities, driving up our national debt while increasing the burden on working families."

Michigan Republicans say the president took the right path, noting that \$285 billion in new or extended tax breaks over five years will go a long way toward relieving the burden on Michigan families.

"I am particularly pleased to see the president's call to make the tax cuts permanent," said Rep. Dave Camp, R-Midland. "In terms of Michigan's economic outlook, this budget is a good starting point."

Under the president's budget, Michigan would see increases in federal funding between 2006 and 2007 in the following programs: food stamps (about \$4 million), foster care (\$3.5 million), housing vouchers (\$6.5 million), Medicaid (\$30 million) and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (about \$27.5 million).

At the same time, the state would be looking at reductions in the areas of child support enforcement (\$400,000), community development block grants (about \$26.4 million), homeland security grants (\$2.6 million) and Title I grants for disadvantaged students (\$4.3 million).

Democrats were especially disappointed with the president's proposal to cut funding for two popular business grant programs -- the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) and the Advanced Technology Program (ATP).

"From my perspective, I would have loved to have seen an increased investment in our people," said Gov. Jennifer Granholm. "If the (president's) agenda is competitiveness, then you don't slash things like work-force training." ATP, a technology development initiative for local businesses, would be eliminated in the 2007 budget, while the MEP, which funds support centers for businesses, would lose about \$60 million. Michigan received \$2.7 million in MEP funds in 2006.

The president's nearly \$36 billion reduction in Medicare over the next five years could have a dramatic impact on Michigan seniors, although the details aren't known yet. Observers believe that seniors most likely will have to pay higher deductibles and co-payments, and Michigan hospitals could be reimbursed at lower levels for providing their services as well.

Many had feared that programs such as Headstart and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, the program that provides cash assistance to the poor, would see major cuts. Instead they're looking at the same level of funding in 2007 as in 2006.

Democrats say that by not increasing federal dollars, the Bush administration is in effect starving important programs, many of which are seeing increases in the number of people they serve or in the cost of providing their services.

"Just keeping the funding at the same level is a massive cut," said Rep. John Dingell, D-Dearborn. "The cuts may not look like much, but they are."

Michigan environmentalists were disappointed with the president's proposed budget as well. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency would see a \$300 million reduction in funding, according to the Northeast-Midwest Institute, a regional policy group.

Many environmentalists had hoped to see major increases in Great Lakes cleanup programs. What they found instead was a \$193 million cut in the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, which is used by cities to offset the cost of rebuilding sewer systems.

"The longer we wait to restore the Great lakes, the more expensive it becomes," said Chris Grubb, a spokesman for the National Wildlife Federation's Great Lakes office in Ann Arbor. "We see now it's up to Congress to invest in the practical solutions to restore the Great Lakes."

The president did provide nearly \$50 million for the Great Lakes Legacy Act, a program that assists local communities in cleaning up contaminated sediments in their waterways.

Bush aims to tame deficits with domestic cuts

Mon Feb 6, 2006 11:20 AM ET

Nine of the 15 Cabinet agencies would see cuts in fiscal 2007, including justice, transportation and education. Among those targeted by the budget knife are community policing, a program to combat violence against women and vocational education.

The budget aims to keep overall growth in discretionary spending below the inflation rate, which was 3.4 percent in 2005. Bush proposed to scale back or abolish 141 discretionary programs that he says are performing poorly. Discretionary programs are those that Congress funds anew each year.

Bush also hopes to squeeze \$65 billion in savings over five years from mandatory programs, including Medicare, the nation's health insurance program for the elderly and disabled, farm supports and pension and other labor-related programs.

Bush inherited surpluses from former Democratic President Bill Clinton but that quickly turned around and the deficit soared on his watch, reaching a record \$413 billion in fiscal 2004.

Spending for the Iraq war and Hurricane Katrina have helped contribute to an expected rise in the deficit in fiscal 2007 to \$423 billion from \$318 billion in 2006. But Bush still maintains he can halve the shortfall by 2009 to \$208 billion.

The biggest savings in mandatory programs would come from the Medicare health program, slated to take a \$36 billion reduction through measures such as slowing the rate of growth for reimbursements to hospitals and other providers.

In the 2007 budget, Bush proposes \$6 billion in cuts to farm programs through 2011. Last year, he sought billions in agriculture saving but reaped few of them.

In addition to defense, a handful of domestic programs viewed as priorities by Bush would get fresh cash. Those include research and development, math and science education, high-tech training and alternative fuel sources.

NASA would see a 3.2 percent increase but space exploration is slated for a cut, including cuts in funds for the shuttle and International Space Station.

The budget also offers new money for the prevention of a bird flu pandemic and to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS.

(Additional reporting by Joanne Kenen)

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Feb 7, 10:14 AM EST

Budget Cuts Take Aim at Medical Programs

By LAURAN NEERGAARD
AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) -- From screening newborns for hearing problems to efforts to fight heart disease and find causes of premature birth, some innovative medical programs demanded by families are on the government chopping block.

President Bush's proposed budget for 2007 contains what his health secretary called "hard choices" when it came to devising how much to spend on a host of competing ailments.

Even the usually favored National Institutes of Health - the nation's lead agency in the hunt for the causes, treatments and ways to prevent diseases - didn't get a raise, receiving flat funding of \$28.6 billion.

Account for inflation, and that's really a cut, argued Dr. Robert Eckel, president of the American Heart Association. In inflation-adjusted terms, Bush's budget would cause a nearly 10 percent drop in spending in medical research since 2003.

Some NIH divisions will lose money: \$40 million from the National Cancer Institute, and \$11 million from the diabetes institute, at a time when Type 2 diabetes is skyrocketing. The NIH this year will spend \$8 per American researching heart disease, the nation's leading killer, an amount the heart association decried even before spotting a planned \$21 million cut for the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute.

Some programs proposed for elimination are those that families have intensely lobbied Congress to enact:

- Universal newborn hearing screening, a \$10 million program that helps states provide those tests for poor families, usually administering them before babies leave the hospital. Detecting hearing loss early helps ensure that babies get appropriate services so they learn and develop properly.

- A federal program that provides lifesaving defibrillators to communities, especially in rural parts of the country. Some 300,000 people a year die of cardiac arrest, where the heart suddenly stops. Death occurs in minutes, long before an ambulance can reach most victims, unless someone nearby uses a portable defibrillator to help jump-start the heart.

- The largest study of U.S. children ever performed. In January, mothers-to-be were to begin enrolling in the National Children's Study to track 100,000 children from mothers' wombs to age 21 to see how the environment - everything from mother's diet to toddler TV to pollution - influences child health. Scientists hoped the first births in the study would point toward some preventable causes of such problems as premature birth, asthma and autism. Ordered by Congress and supported by both medical groups and the chemical industry, scientists already have spent \$60 million in tax dollars preparing the study, with waiting lists of families hoping to participate.

But NIH budget documents direct researchers instead to close the program down by year's end.

"This is an affront to America's children. It will really hurt children today and for decades to come," said Dr. Alan Fleischman of the New York Academy of Medicine, who chairs the study's federal advisory committee.

NIH Director Elias Zerhouni defended the budget, saying his agency retained enough flexibility to direct money to the most promising research avenues.

"I think it's very clear that what you call cuts ... what we have to recognize is that you have to do prioritization," he said.

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Letters for February 7

The Grand Rapids Press

Tuesday, February 07, 2006

Health care equality

The Jan. 10 Press article "Doctor aims to stir health-care movement," noted global health expert Paul Farmer called for a movement to make health care a human right. How ironic that the third world countries he assists are gaining on health care equality and this prosperous nation is not! The Medicare Part D prescription plan is not only incomprehensible and not working, it's too costly for many seniors and does nothing about the outrageous cost of drugs for all Americans. Paying annually for prescription insurance with \$250 deductibles and \$2,500 "donut holes" not covered at all is no help. Those who couldn't afford their prescriptions before, still can't (with or without Medicare Part D). Medicare wasn't broken and didn't need fixing! Paying insurance companies hundreds of dollars per person per month to take seniors off Medicare (which was working fine) will cost more federal tax dollars, not fewer, and for no better coverage. What federal legislators passed as a "solution" to the health care and prescription needs of senior citizens is a fiasco!

Improving insurance companies' profits and making no demands on drug makers may help the legislators' campaign funds, but it does nothing for the average citizen.

SHIRLEY GLASS
Grand Rapids

Group-home rules: Why this meddling?

Tuesday, February 07, 2006

Michigan's Department of Human Services is proposing new administrative rules for an industry that cares for 50,000-plus state residents. But are the proposed rules intended to help patients -- or unionize 5,000 adult foster care and home-for-the-aged facilities?

Opposition to the rules' change has been mounting since last summer, when the rules were first proposed. Last week the political fat hit the fire when Senate Republicans introduced legislation to stop the Granholm administration from imposing the rules. That set up a clear test of legislative and executive authority. Ordinarily, the executive branch comes up with the rules to implement laws enacted by the Legislature; in this case, some lawmakers have concluded it's time to temper the governor's executive authority.

Under the legislation, lawmakers would bar practices that grant preferences to health occupations with collective bargaining. Here are two examples of these too-zealous rules:

Under the proposed rules, "A home shall provide its direct-care employees with compensation and benefits necessary to attract and retain a sufficient number of qualified direct-care employees to provide for the protection, health, safety and welfare of residents."

How will the state measure compliance with this nebulous wage-benefit requirement?

Here's the offending language: "A collective bargaining agreement with direct-care employees of the home resulting from participation of the home in multi-employer collective-bargaining activities ... shall be deemed by the department as sufficient evidence that the home is in compliance with this subrule."

Yes, this says in effect that the home has met this standard if it is a unionized workplace. If not, presumably the issue is arguable along the lines of what is "necessary to attract and retain sufficient" employees.

The proposed rules also would permit the state to establish a direct-care staff registry of individuals eligible to work in group homes and homes for the aged. This registry would include name, address, phone number and Social Security numbers, age, date of birth and employment record -- including reasons for leaving.

The information is pertinent for employers -- but it strikes us as over-reaching for the state's needs. Unless, that is, the intent is to allow unions access to the information for purposes of organizing. Since operators of the homes say the information would be public information, available with a Freedom of Information Act request, that is a valid concern.

Granholm administration officials, when asked about these concerns, respond that the rules are merely proposed. Yet the process seems to be leading inevitably to affirmation.

That concerns us for the reasons cited above. But beyond that is the financial impact this could have on the state business climate as a whole, plus the impact on one small Home for the Aged that is of special concern to us -- the John George Home. Clearly that operation cannot bear extra burdens of state regulation at this point. And our sense is that many small adult foster-care homes are in the same boat.

Common sense dictates that, when you're in a hole and can't get out, you don't dig the hole deeper. Michigan is in an economic hole. This sort of rules-making, detached from economic reality, is just what the state doesn't need, for it would add expense to an entire industry.

Preferably, the state should moderate its intrusive rules and focus instead on rules that would actually improve life for the home residents.
Failing that, the Senate legislation deserves favorable consideration.

--The Jackson Citizen Patriot

Assisted living home shuts down State agency recommends South Pointe's license be revoked after investigators find animal feces inside

By LOUISE WREGE
H-P Correspondent

ST. JOSEPH —The owner of the South Pointe Assisted Living center closed its doors Dec. 31, but it might not have been enough to head off trouble with state and township officials. The house at 2900 Niles Road in St. Joseph Township is in foreclosure, its license may be revoked and township officials are taking steps to make sure any back taxes are paid. Owner Sue Martin contended all of the allegations against the home are either lies or have been blown out of proportion, she threatened to sue if the township continues to spread "I don't want to go that route," she said. "I'm not a big lawsuit-happy person. But there's lies in there. That's the problem. I'll sue them." Martin, owner of South Pointe for years, said she closed the home Dec. 31 to pursue an at-home networking business elsewhere.

She said the closing had nothing to do with a Jan. 26 report from a state agency, the Department of Human Services (DHS) of Children and Adult Licensing.

The report recommends that South Pointe's license be revoked. The report states that animal feces were inside the residence that a cat was found walking on a kitchen counter and animal food was mixed with dishes used for resident use.

Township Manager James Boothby said the township was aware of problems in October when a neighbor complained there were seven dogs living there. He said a township ordinance allows only four animals at a dwelling.

Boothby said the township's ordinance enforcement officer, Steve De Witt, inspected the facility and



JOHN MADILL/H-P STAFF

John Madill /H-P Staff

SOUTH POINTE ASSISTED LIVING at 2900 Niles Road in St. Joseph Township closed Dec. 31. Owner Sue Martin said the closing had nothing to do with a report from a state agency recommending that South Pointe's license be revoked.

found dog feces indoors and a strong odor.

De Witt sent a letter to the state licensing agency with his findings. According to the state report, De Witt and Donna Konopka, a licensing consultant with the state, made an

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unannounced inspection of the facility Nov. 4.

During that visit, De Witt and Konopka were not allowed in Martin's private quarters, but the report states they could what appeared to be about two inches of bird droppings in parrot cage and dog feces on the floor. They also found ar feces in the hallway outside the residents' bedroom doors. In the kitchen, which connected the facility to Martin's private quarters, they saw a cat walking over a sink and another at a kitchen cabinet. On Nov. 15, an environmental health sanitarian official saw a cat food dish and water bowl on the kitchen counter, according to the report.

Martin said she did not have to allow the investigators into private quarters because when she had the facility renovated she had a fire wall put up.

"A legal fire wall indicates a separate structure, even if the attached," she said.

She said the cat food bowl and water dish were put on the kitchen counter temporarily because the floor was being mopped. She said the animal feces found outside the residents' bedrooms was actually a piece of a brown teddy bear.

In the state report, Martin was cited for having animal feces both the residential and private areas of the facility and for allowing her private quarters to be inspected.

The state report also cited Martin for failing to notify the foster care licensing division when a resident died Nov. 3.

The report states that all of these were repeat offenses. It recommends that South Pointe's license be revoked.

Martin said she has no plans to reopen an assisted living facility and that South Pointe is in foreclosure to a bank.

She said she was licensed to care for up to 15 adults but only had seven residents because she wanted to give them more personalized care.

Martin's two daughters and a son worked with her. She said keeping the number of residents small also made it possible for her to staff with her immediate family and not hire outside help. Fred Batterman, a resident at South Pointe from April 2000 until it closed, said he never saw any unhealthy conditions at the facility.

"I lived there so I saw everything," he said. "When the dogs would do the mess, I'd tell the caretaker and they'd clean it right up." He said he enjoyed his time there and misses it. The current facility has no pets.

"The cats would come into my room and visit, and I enjoyed that," he said.

Martin said people visited the residents all the time and never said they saw anything unsanitary or smelled anything bad. De Witt said the residents and visitors may not have seen anything wrong because most of the violations were found in the kitchen and other areas that were not public.

"But what I did see concerned me for the welfare of the people living there," he said.

Township Supervisor Ron Griffin said he is concerned that unsanitary conditions were allowed to happen in his township. "After reading the report, I cannot believe that we as a township would let this condition occur," he said.

Assisted living facilities are licensed and inspected by the

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not local governments.

"It wasn't until the problem became external to the facility local government ... became involved," he said. "We do a job with liquor license inspections than this." He said local do liquor license inspections once a month. Konopka said assisted living facilities are inspected every other year. The township has put notices on the facility's doors stating that nothing can be removed from the site. Boothby said the township has the authority to auction off items to pay back taxes on personal property. The facility also owes money on real property taxes. No amount was cited.

'Adult foster care' is correct

FLINT JOURNAL LETTER TO THE EDITOR

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Tuesday, February 07, 2006

JOURNAL READER

The Flint Journal's coverage of the death of an elderly gentleman at an Owosso adult foster care - while very well done - contained a significant factual error.

The victim, Gerald C. Blackmer, lived in an adult foster care, not a nursing home. The coverage of this heartbreaking story was balanced and sensitive to the Blackmer family. But too often, media accounts of such tragedies are sensationalized.

Labeling all aging services providers as "nursing homes" serves only to fuel the public's misunderstanding of aging services. Such unfortunate inaccuracies can unfairly damage the reputation of the thousands of aging services providers that provide compassionate and committed care to seniors around the state. They can also break the spirit of staff who work tirelessly to care for the aging and make it difficult to recruit quality employees into what is truly a noble endeavor: helping seniors age with grace and dignity.

Nothing reflects the character of a society more than how it cares for those who have difficulty caring for themselves. That's why members of the Michigan Association of Homes and Services for the Aging have voluntarily joined a national program known as Quality First. By signing the Quality First covenant, MAHSA members commit to a set of principles and a management style that helps aging services providers deliver top-notch care and the safe, comfortable environment our seniors deserve.

MAHSA and its members appreciate The Flint Journal's sensitivity in covering this tragic situation. We look forward to similar sensitivity in applying the proper label to aging services providers in future coverage.

Sandra J. Kilde
President and CEO

Friday, February 3, 2006

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Nowak to stand trial in baby's killing

BY RAY KISONAS

rayk@monroenews.com

The Dundee man accused of squeezing his baby to death has been ordered to stand trial on murder charges.

Keith Nowak, 30, was back in First District court Thursday to complete a preliminary examination hearing that began last month. He is facing murder charges in the Nov. 26, 2005, death of his son.

After three more witnesses for the prosecution testified, District

Court Judge Terrence Bronson ordered Mr. Nowak to stand trial. The defendant will be arraigned in higher court later this month.

If convicted, Mr. Nowak faces life in prison.

One of Thursday's witnesses was Monroe County Sheriff's Detective Dave Davison, who assisted in the investigation.

Detective Davison testified that Mr. Nowak was caring for his 2-month-old son, Andrew Nowak, in the early morning hours Nov. 26.

Several family members had testified earlier that the baby had been cranky and fussy due to congestion.

During an interview with detectives shortly after the baby had died, Detective Davison testified that Mr. Nowak at first denied hurting his son. But during that same interview, he changed his story, Detective Davison said.

"He stated that it was the most frustrated he'd been with the

See TRIAL, Page 11A

Trial (cont.)

baby," Detective Davison testified. "He tried everything ... he said he might have lost it for a second and squeezed the baby."

The testimony was a continuation of the hearing that began Jan. 13. A preliminary examination is among the first stages of a criminal proceeding. Judge Bronson determined that a crime had been committed, and there was enough evidence to believe Mr. Nowak was involved.

Now the case moves to

Monroe County Circuit Court where Mr. Nowak is to be arraigned on Feb. 17.

In the meantime, Mr. Nowak will wait in jail.

Assistant prosecutor Alison Arnold called several witnesses during the proceedings that lasted about four hours over the two days. On Thursday, she called Dustin Ripple, the baby's uncle. Mr. Ripple testified that during the chaotic morning when the child was found not breathing, an emergency worker who was kneeling over the baby accidentally slipped.

The baby was on the couch

and the rescuer's arm came down briefly across the baby's chest, Mr. Ripple testified.

"There was water all over the floor," Mr. Ripple said. "He went to stand up and fell forward."

A coroner testified that the baby suffered 15 broken ribs and a fractured femur. Dr. Diane Scala-Barnett of the Lucas County (Ohio) Coroner's Office said the injuries were so severe that they could only be caused by sustained pressure, such as squeezing. She testified that CPR efforts would not have caused such injuries.

Co
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Mom gets probation for assault on child

Tuesday, February 07, 2006

rhall@kalamazoogazette.com 388-7784

A Portage woman who told police she tried to smother her 9-year-old son after an argument about snowpants won't serve any jail time, according to the Van Buren County Prosecutor's Office.

Amy Soule, 32, was sentenced to three years of probation Monday by Van Buren County Circuit Judge William C. Buhl. Soule pleaded guilty Jan. 3 to assault with intent to commit great bodily harm, a 10-year felony.

Before pleading guilty Jan. 3, Soule had been charged with attempted murder. Soule told police something just "snapped" when she attempted to smother her son Dec. 5 at her mother's house in Paw Paw Township.

Authorities: Children Left Alone In Locked Car

Witnesses Say Mother Was Gone For 15 Minutes

POSTED: 4:28 pm EST February 6, 2006
ClickOnDetroit.com

A 33-year-old Rochester Hills woman could face charges amid allegations that she left her two young children in a locked car.

The Oakland County Prosecutor's Office is considering child endangerment charges against the woman, who is accused of leaving her 2 -year-old son and 9-month-old daughter alone in the car of a Babies "R" Us parking lot, according to the *Observer & Eccentric*.

On Jan. 16, a shopper at the Babies "R" Us on Baldwin Road noticed the boy inside the vehicle and called police. When the mother exited the Babies "R" Us she questioned the complainant who was still on the phone, and told her to mind her own business, the paper reported.

The woman told the Oakland County Sheriff's Office that she was only in the store for one to three minutes to buy diapers, and that she made arrangements with an employee to remain in the entrance of the store, in plain sight of the vehicle, according to the *Observer & Eccentric*.

The store employee denied the reports, and also reported the woman did not purchase diapers, but returned several items instead.

The woman told police she left her children in the car because the 2-year-old boy had a double ear infection and the 9-month-old girl had the stomach flu.

Witnesses say the woman was in the store for about 15 minutes, while her children remained in the vehicle, according to the paper's reports.

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Police seek new system for checks on school employees

February 7, 2006

BY LORI HIGGINS

FREE PRESS EDUCATION WRITER

The Michigan State Police will seek a better automated system for checking the criminal backgrounds of school employees, hoping to reduce the number of incorrect reports, officials said Monday.

School districts and teachers unions statewide have complained that reports sent to school districts last week attributed criminal offenses to some workers who never have been convicted of a crime.

The State Police must conduct the searches twice a year. By July 2008, all school employees must be fingerprinted for background checks. The rules are based on laws that are aimed at ridding schools of sex offenders. The laws went into effect Jan. 1.

The database the state used to compile the list released last week was automated and used names, gender and date of birth. But that wasn't enough to keep some people from being identified for crimes they didn't commit.

Shanon Akans, a State Police spokeswoman, said the department will look for a system similar to an existing Internet background check program that uses more information, like Social Security numbers, to conduct the checks.

Debate Rekindled on Preserving Families at Risk

By LESLIE KAUFMAN

Published: February 4, 2006

New York Times

In the starkest terms, a child welfare worker who suspects a child is being neglected or abused by a parent has two choices, both fraught with risk.

The worker can remove the child from the family — a traumatic act with lasting consequences — and turn to foster care, where the odds of the child's being mistreated are significant.

Or the worker can leave the child with an impoverished or troubled family and provide support in the form of housekeeping help or drug treatment, and then visit frequently to monitor progress.

Though debate has raged for decades about whether either option really keeps children safer, New York City started in 1999 to explicitly lean toward the second choice, "family preservation," as the effort is known, in all but cases where harm to the child was thought to be imminent.

The city's last three child welfare commissioners have been so committed to this philosophy that the effort has played a role in sharply cutting the number of children in foster care over the last decade.

In recent years, Chicago has made a similar effort, while many other jurisdictions, statistics suggest, have been more inclined to place children in foster care.

New York's reduction in the number of children in foster care happened even as the number of complaints of abuse and neglect of children have declined at a much slower rate. Indeed, for the last several years, the agency has been monitoring more children in supportive care in their homes than it has children in foster care.

Then, over the last 10 weeks, four children whose families were known to the child welfare agency have been killed in their homes by adults, the authorities say. Another drowned while his mother was in the next room.

Some of the deaths involved cases where children had been removed from potentially dangerous homes and then returned. At least one, however, involved a child whose state of peril was never determined because caseworkers failed to fully investigate her home life.

But the string of deaths, which received extraordinary news media coverage, has found the city on the defensive about its family preservation efforts. Child welfare officials have pledged to stay the course, and while conceding that a number of the deaths resulted from mistakes or possible misjudgments by caseworkers, they have disputed the notion that the children died because of the failings of a systemic philosophy.

Some supporters of the policy assert that the scrutiny itself is unfair, insisting that the deaths were terrible flukes and statistically meaningless.

They point out that children die in foster care too, and that the news media's focus on the recent deaths has prompted a panic of sorts that has resulted in children being removed from homes that may be struggling, but are hardly a menace.

Others, though, see a system that has become too inclined to keep families together — sometime even overlooking real risks — while failing to adequately make good on the kind of help the families need.

They point to rising rates of repeated abuse in the homes — a red flag in child welfare work — as a sign that the city could and should be doing better at providing help or removing children to protective care.

Administration and child welfare officials have said they are taking a hard look at whether the agency is providing quality services quickly enough to the families they leave together.

"I do not have an ideology," said John B. Mattingly, commissioner of the city's Administration for Children's Services. "I have built my entire career around fighting that sense that one or another thing is the right thing. I believe that children do best in strong, forever families. If the birth family cannot be made safe, then another family should be a strong permanent family. But families that can be helped before they become dangerous to their children should be."

The family preservation effort, in its current form, began in New York back in earnest in 1999. At the time, the system was full of children who had been brought into care as a result of the crack epidemic, as well as in reaction to the death of a little girl named Elisa Izquierdo, who herself was overlooked by overtaxed caseworkers before being beaten to death by her mother in November 1995.

The child welfare commissioner at the time, Nicholas Scoppetta, was unequivocal that the placing of children in foster care after Elisa's death had been too knee-jerk and gone too far. "I'm absolutely convinced we have too many children in foster care," he said in a 2001 interview. Mr. Scoppetta, with the aid of Mr. Mattingly, who was then serving the agency as a consultant, put into place a system that would allow more children to stay at home, even in poor or unsettled households.

The policy had three aims: training caseworkers to make smart evaluations of the risk to children, giving troubled families help as early as possible to avoid reaching a crisis stage, and removing children from their homes if danger was imminent.

Susan Jacobs, a lawyer and executive director of the Center for Family Representation, an organization that provides representation to parents involved in Family Court, said the policy was based on two hard-learned truisms of humane child welfare.

"First, there isn't a child who doesn't want to go home to their birth parents," she said. "And secondly, just because you are not a model parent does not mean you are a terrible parent."

Over subsequent years the number of children in foster care dropped precipitously, from nearly 31,000 in fiscal year 2001 to below 17,000, where it stands today. The reasons for that were multiple, but no one disputes the new policy played a role.

Throughout, the deaths of children who had at some point been involved with child welfare authorities — including children in foster care — bounced roughly between 25 and 35 a year. Over and over, in interviews with reporters and in City Council testimony, the people in charge of the child welfare system cited the decline in the number of foster children as a sign of the health of the system.

Some veteran child welfare experts, however, came to wonder if the city was capable of making judgments about who should be left at home.

"Their sole criteria for claiming reform has been the reduction of the in-custody population without regard to whether the right children are at home and the right children are in custody," said Marcia Robinson Lowry, the founder and executive director of Children's Rights Inc., an advocacy group and longtime critic of the city's child welfare policies.

Ms. Lowry, who said she admired Mr. Mattingly, the current child welfare commissioner, said that while city officials were leaving more children in at-risk homes, they were not paying attention to the critical tools for safely executing the policy — namely the quality of the

decision-making by caseworkers and the adequacy of support services that were supposed to be provided to the families. And there were clear warnings, she said, that those failings were causing children harm.

One possible sign of trouble was raised in a 2005 report in which city officials admitted that the number of children "who were the subject of repeat allegations" of abuse and neglect within one year had risen slightly.

The increase, though minor, involved a category watched closely by child welfare officials and outside experts. Two of the recent deaths involved children whose abuse or neglect had prompted repeated allegations and investigations.

David Tobis, executive director of the Child Welfare Fund, an organization that makes grants to support child welfare reforms, is a supporter of the family preservation policy. But he said that he was worried that families identified as needing help were not actually getting the services they required and were promised.

"The number of kids entering preventive services has declined slightly over the last two years," Mr. Tobis said. "It should be increasing astronomically if we are leaving so many more at home."

Andrew White, director of the Center for New York City Affairs at The New School, echoed that concern. "Every one of these cases reveals the failure to reach the family sooner with some kind of support system," he said of the five recent deaths.

The breakdowns between the caseworkers who investigate the abuse allegations and the workers in charge of providing help to the families have already come to the attention of Mr. Mattingly, who says he has made changes to fix the problem.

Mr. Mattingly said that he was working to improve a new system for evaluating the work of agencies with city contracts for providing support services for troubled families. Such a system has been in place for years to evaluate the performance of the foster care agencies that work with the city.

On family preservation, Mr. Mattingly said he was not an ideologue but thought that a child's safety had to come first.

"It is clear from these few cases, which we are looking at deeply, that there are serious practice problems in this system," he said. "If you are just plugging families into various services, it is bad practice. If you are leaving children in the home just to leave them in the home, that is bad practice and we will fix it."

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg yesterday repeated his support for Mr. Mattingly and his policies.

"You can't remove every child from every family whenever there is the potential for a problem," he said, "because there wouldn't be enough foster homes and the foster homes have their problems as well."

Tuesday, February 07, 2006

A child is waiting

Creative teen is anxious about the future

Rosemary Dorr / Special to The Detroit News

He's 13, likes to build things and wants to learn a trade, but Javonté is anxious about his future. "When will I get a family?" he asks.

Javonté adds, "I like to create stuff. I like rap. I like to swim, run track and play baseball. I like to go places like the mall, play pool and go bowling." He hopes for a family that would "be nice, cool, active, give me a lot of learning and be fair."

The ninth-grader, survivor of chaos, is progressing. "I got all Cs on my last report card," he says. "I act pretty good. Now I know what not to do and what to do right."

"Javonté has learned how to communicate," notes his family worker at the therapeutic residence where Javonté has lived two years. "He's maturing. He's friendly. I think he's willing to adapt and try to fit in. He wants somebody to talk to who wouldn't judge him. He'll tell you what he thinks."

His adoption worker adds, "Javonté does well in school in a more structured classroom. He's a smart kid. He's come a long way."

Might you consider adoption? Please talk with Bonnie Powers at Wayne County Department of Human Services, (313) 396-0394.

Last column's child: Outgoing Khaleda, 14, works hard in school and brings cheer into a family. For information, call Gloria J. Weir-Pearson at Evergreen Children's Services, (313) 862-1000, ext. 132.

A Child is Waiting appears Tuesdays in Features.

Wayne County

NEWS IN A MINUTE: Wayne County

February 7, 2006

DETROIT: Teenage cousins held after school is vandalized

Two Detroit teens are in the Wayne County Juvenile Detention Facility after breaking windows, ransacking offices and smashing computers Sunday at Lessenger Middle School on the city's west side, police said.

Detroit Public Schools public safety officers caught the boys, cousins ages 15 and 14, inside the school at 8401 Trinity St., at 2:45 a.m. Sunday, according to a police report filed in the juvenile division of Wayne County Family Court.

According to the report, safety officers Robert Savage and David Selley responded to a school alarm and found that someone had entered through a window.

The boys were found inside the assistant principal's office, which had been ransacked and where a computer had been smashed. The school's main office and a staff room also had been ransacked, the report said.

The boys appeared Monday before Family Court Referee Kathleen Walton Allen on charges of burglary with intent to commit a felony, two counts each of malicious destruction of property over \$1,000 and violation of the city's curfew ordinance.

Their court-assigned attorneys, Daniel McGuire and Wendy Barnwell, asked that the boys be released on personal bonds because they are "innocent until proven guilty."

But Wayne County Assistant Prosecutor Jeffrey Plymale said a high bond was needed because the allegations are serious.

Allen ordered the boys held on \$10,000 cash bonds each pending a Feb. 16 hearing.

Also over the weekend, 14 classrooms were vandalized at the McKinney Day Treatment Center, 11131 Kercheval. Vandals also struck at the Ferguson Academy, 2750 Selden, damaging the kitchen area, said Detroit Public Schools spokeswoman Mattie Majors. Both schools were closed Monday for cleanup.

By Jack Kresnak and Cecil Angel

Homeless man's body discovered frozen in tent

Exact cause of death unknown, but foul play not suspected

Tuesday, February 07, 2006

BY AMALIE NASH

Ann Arbor News Staff Reporter

The cause of death will not be known until autopsy results are complete, but police said that foul play is not suspected.

It's also not clear at this point how much of a factor the weather played in the death. The man's name was not released this morning because police are still searching for relatives to notify.

"Unfortunately, it's not uncommon to see one or two people die because of exposure over the course of a winter in Ann Arbor," Detective Sgt. Richard Kinsey said.

Two other homeless people discovered the man's body inside a gray and yellow tent in the woods behind a building commonly known as the old Moose Lodge, in the 400 block of South Maple Road, police said. The man had borrowed the tent from another homeless person to set up Friday, and the man's friends said they advised him not to pitch the tent in the swampy area because of heavy rains that evening, police said.

The man, who had been in the Ann Arbor area for several years, was last seen Friday when he was drinking with a friend, Kinsey said. His friends went looking for him around 2:30 p.m. Monday.

Police said the man's body was in 6 to 8 inches of water, which had mostly frozen.

The area where the tent was pitched is routinely used by homeless people. Police said there were no other tents in that immediate area, although there is another encampment a few hundred feet away in the woods behind the Kroger store.

"That's a tragedy that someone would die that way in our community," said City Council Member Chris Easthope, D-5th Ward. "It underscores the reason why we need to implement the blueprint to end homelessness in this county."

There is a city and countywide initiative to end homelessness in Washtenaw County. It involves a combination of more affordable housing and a strong community support network that would include drug and alcohol abuse counseling and treatment, Easthope said.

In 2003, a 51-year-old homeless man died of hypothermia and had large amounts of alcohol in his system, police said. His frozen body was found that January next to a tree in South Maple Park. His death occurred during a freezing spell that lasted several days and prompted homeless shelters to offer more options for people to stay indoors.

Police said weather also likely played a factor in the 2002 death of a 50-year-old homeless man, whose body was found in front of the In and Out party store in the 500 block of East University Avenue. The man was slumped over with his head between his legs, huddled in a doorway.

Staff reporter Tom Gantert contributed to this report.

Amalie Nash can be reached at anash@annarbornews.com or 734-994-6832.

Super Bowl party leftovers go to homeless

In the past week, Forgotten Harvest has rescued an estimated 25,000 pounds of food

Kim Kozlowski / The Detroit News

February 7, 2006

Shrimp cocktail. Lobster tail. Chocolate souffle.

Sound like the menu from a swank Super Bowl party?

It was, but the leftovers from the parties have found their way onto the plates of the hungry and homeless, thanks to Forgotten Harvest, a local organization that rescues perishable food and distributes it to Metro Detroit soup kitchens, shelters and food pantries.

In the past week, Forgotten Harvest has rescued an estimated 25,000 pounds of food from Super Bowl parties -- food that might have ended up in the garbage -- and has passed it out to seven local organizations working with the homeless.

One last windfall is expected today, when the organization picks up excess food from Ford Field. "The food we are getting could be served on the White House table, it's that wonderful," said Susan Goodell, Forgotten Harvest's executive director.

Forgotten Harvest began in 1990 with the goal of collecting 1,000 pounds of surplus food a month. It has since grown to collect more than 580,000 pounds of food monthly and says it's the third-largest food rescue organization in the United States.

The organization uses refrigerated trucks to pick up food close to expiration such as milk, meats, fresh fruits and vegetables. It collects from 340 local donors, including grocery stores, restaurants and caterers, and makes sure the food is on a hungry person's plate by nightfall.

This year, the organization projects it will collect and distribute 8.1 million pounds, with Super Bowl parties providing an added boost.

When Troy Meadows came across an organization providing transitional housing to homeless veterans, he described himself as "hungry, mad starving."

Nine months later, Meadows has gained 15 pounds and is eating regularly at Michigan Veterans Foundation, one of 119 organizations that benefit from fresh food from Forgotten Harvest.

Another group that got a windfall this week was The Open Door program for the homeless at Fort Street Presbyterian Church in Detroit, which received a truckload of food Monday that featured hams, steaks and salmon.

It will use that food to feed about 800 homeless people this week at the church, along with feeding programs it hosts at two other churches.

"I can't believe all of this food," said Stacey Kershaw, coordinator of the Open Door program.

"There's a lot of meat. And it's different meat. Everyone is going to be happy."

You can reach Kim Kozlowski at (313) 222-2024 or kkozlowski@detnews.com.

Forgotten Harvest

Forgotten Harvest delivers more than 580,000 meals a month to hungry people by collecting food from donors in the region.

Some of the biggest donors are Kroger grocery stores, Farmer Jack warehouse and Nino Salvaggio stores.

It costs the agency 17 cents to deliver each meal. To help the group in its mission, send donations to Forgotten Harvest, 21455 Melrose Ave., Suite 9. Southfield, MI, 48075. Or visit www.forgottenharvest.org/movemeals.html.

Group urges city to adopt human-rights ordinance

Tuesday, February 07, 2006

kjessup@kalamazoogazette.com 388-8590

The Kalamazoo Homeless Action Network said Monday night it will push the Kalamazoo City Commission to adopt a human-rights act to protect citizens against what the group claims is "discrimination against poor and homeless people in the city of Kalamazoo."

A series of people speaking on behalf of the group presented a broadly defined, five-part resolution that they claimed would expand federal 1964 and 1976 civil rights legislation and prohibit discrimination against people "due to real or perceived economic status."

Tim Birch, a group board member, acknowledged that the measure is targeted at some specific downtown locations, including McDonald's on Kalamazoo Avenue, where the group claims poor and homeless people experience rules not applied to other customers.

"If someone looks poor or homeless, if they stay in a business more than a half-hour, they're asked to leave," Birch claimed. "Other people are able to stay for an hour or more. We're not sure how widespread the problem is."

Some downtown establishments frequented by Kalamazoo's homeless claim their businesses are hurt when homeless patrons allegedly disturb other patrons who then go elsewhere.

The group's proposed human-rights act would prohibit people or businesses from "deny(ing) an individual the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages or accommodations of public accommodation or public services because of real or perceived economic status."

It also proposes prohibiting public places from posting signs, establishing "unreasonably short time limits" to remain in a business, denying restroom access or charging someone with loitering or trespassing "based on real or perceived economic status."

Birch said he does not believe the proposed act would prohibit an upscale hotel or restaurant from declining to lodge or serve someone who would be unable to pay the bill.

"If someone goes into a downtown business and is being disruptive or steals something, this does not protect that behavior," Birch said.

He said other communities, including Ann Arbor, have had local human-rights ordinances for years.

"Obviously we want the City Commission to adopt this act," Birch said. "We met with city staff last week, and they believe enforcement could be an issue. We don't believe it's any more difficult to enforce than any other civil rights protections."

City commissioners set no timetable for considering the act. Group officials said they'll meet again with city administrators in two weeks to pursue the issue.

In other business Monday night, commissioners accepted an \$850 grant from the Michigan Department of Community Health's drug-control-policy office to help pay for the design, printing and inserting of information in residential water bills to raise awareness about methamphetamine production and use. Officials hope that informing customers about signs associated with dangerous meth production in homes and vehicles will lead to more tips and arrests.

Published February 7, 2006

Program requests help in installing heat kits By cutting fees, contractors can aid more needy

By Stacey Range
Lansing State Journal

Consumers Energy and DTE are giving \$100,000 more to the state's Save Energy with Ease program to respond to the heavy demand for its home-heating kits.

But organizers now are hoping contractors will respond in similar fashion - offering their services either at a discount or free.

The programmable thermostats that come with the kits cost more to install than originally thought. More needy people could get help with heating their homes this winter if the contractor fees were less.

"There are a lot of people out there who would really like these kits but we can't help them if we have to use the money for installations," said Doreen Woodward, executive director of the Michigan Community Action Agency Association.

The program, created in January to give home-heating kits with programmable thermostats and other items to 3,450 residents statewide, generated an overwhelming response that nearly shut down phone lines at agencies distributing them.

The Michigan Public Service Commission received more than 2,100 calls about the program the day after it was announced, setting a record for the most calls received in one day.

"It's clear people need help this winter," commission spokeswoman Judy Palnau said.

The kits, funded with \$276,000 from DTE, Consumers, Indiana Michigan Power Co. and SEMCO Energy Gas Co., were offered on a first-come, first-serve basis to people who agreed to attend a two-hour winterization workshop.

The workshops were full within a day and a half.

The Capital Area Community Services, which is handling the program for Ingham, Eaton, Clinton and Shiawassee counties, has a list of 269 people wanting the kits and just 128 kits to distribute, Executive Director Ivan Love said.

Woodward said installing the thermostats will cost more the \$25 she had allotted for each installation because it has to be done by a licensed contractor.

Contact Stacey Range at 377-1157 or srange@lsj.com.

CAA to conduct class on reducing heat costs

Tuesday, February 07, 2006

Jackson Citizen Patriot

The Community Action Agency of South Central Michigan will conduct a free, one-hour class on how to save energy by reducing heating costs, sealing out the cold and more from 4 to 5 p.m. Wednesday at the CAA office at Caldwell School, 1100 N. Berrien St., Albion.

This class is open to the public.

For more information, call the CAA office at (517) 629-9403.

Metro Detroit

FEMA pays last hotel bills today

Katrina evacuees may get extension, rent assistance

February 7, 2006

BY FRANK WITSIL
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

The Federal Emergency Management Agency will quit paying hotels today to house Hurricane Katrina evacuees, unless they have been approved for an extension, agency officials said Monday.

As of Sunday, there were 10 hotels housing evacuees in Michigan -- less than half the number in December, according to FEMA.

FEMA spokeswoman Barbara Ellis said Monday that the agency is trying to help evacuees find alternative housing, and evacuees may be eligible for additional rental assistance or help from the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

If evacuees are not approved by FEMA for an extension, or the hotels do not pick up the bills for them, those who remain will have to pay for their rooms, Ellis said.

Officials at some hotels said they will continue to board remaining evacuees after the deadline without forcing them to pay.

"We are trying to help them," said Wallace Wells, the administrator of the Village of Hope, a nonprofit organization set up by the Southfield Inn to provide evacuees with assistance.

Twenty evacuees occupy eight rooms at the hotel, and 10 people are expected to move out by the end of the week, Wells said.

"We don't enable their own apathy," Wells said. "We ask every day, 'What are you doing about housing?'"

In addition, the Comfort Inn in Mt. Clemens, which is still housing evacuees, said it also might decide to provide financial assistance to the one family who will be remaining at the hotel after this week.

As of Monday, there were two families in four rooms, and one family is moving out this week, hotel general manager Jamie Copeland said.

The St. Regis Hotel in Detroit had two evacuees in early December. A hotel employee said the last evacuee left the hotel on Jan. 24.

Initially slated to end in Michigan in December, the subsidies to hotels housing hurricane evacuees were extended by a federal judge.

Lawyers representing evacuees argued that FEMA failed to provide aid to many who qualified and that information on aid has been slow to reach those who needed it the most.

The agency spent more than \$522 million on hotel and motel rooms to house evacuees, officials said.

Contact **FRANK WITSIL** at 248-351-3690 or witsil@freepress.com.

FEMA-backed rooms by the numbers

- *10*
Number of Michigan hotels housing evacuees as of Sunday
24
Number of Michigan hotels that housed evacuees in December
6,000
Estimated number of evacuees to come to Michigan
\$522 million
Amount FEMA has paid for hotel and motel rooms
\$6 billion
Amount of financial and housing assistance the federal government has provided the
nearly 1.5 million Katrina victims

Source: FEMA; staff reports

Super Bowl is major boost to charity groups

Officials say goal is to keep it going

February 7, 2006

BY SHABINA S. KHATRI
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Thanks to the big game, Michigan's charities -- and those they serve -- should be flying high for the next few weeks. But after the leftover meals are eaten and the added donations spent, charities will be right back where they started -- unless residents work to keep the momentum going, said some leaders of metro Detroit charitable groups.

"As great as Super Bowl was for the city and the way the city rallied around the Super Bowl, we need to rally around the needs of the poor and disadvantaged," said Russ Russell, director of development for the Salvation Army Eastern Michigan Division.

Russell thanked the Super Bowl for helping the charity raise more than \$10,000 through its Souper Bowl of Caring campaign, which it launched last month. The response to the campaign, in which a dollar of each bowl of soup purchased at 25 area restaurants goes to the Salvation Army, was especially enthusiastic at downtown eateries like Andiamo's, Russell said.

But it will be area residents, and not visiting football fans, who help the group raise the additional \$15,000 it needs by the campaign's end on Feb. 23.

Metro Detroiters also will be the ones making sure charities such as Gleaners Community Food Bank of Southeastern Michigan stay stocked all year.

Gleaners and the Salvation Army were among the more than 200 metro Detroit charitable groups on the official Super Bowl recipients list. In the weeks leading up to the game, many of those organizations received a percentage of funds raised by the more than 100 game-affiliated events. The NFL expected to generate about \$8 million for metro Detroit charities from Super Bowl-related activities, but it could be months before the exact amount raised will be released. Though charity leaders say that money and attention was appreciated, they hope that this will mark the beginning -- and not an end -- to the tackling of issues such as poverty, illiteracy and unemployment.

"We just need a lot of assistance with time, talent and treasure as we elevate the poorest person that needs our help to the point of self-sufficiency," Russell said. "That's our goal, one individual at a time."

Gleaners received a big weekend boost from Taste of the NFL, a high-end fund-raiser in Novi that was attended by more than 2,800 people. The group spent Monday distributing the more than 1,500 pounds of fresh produce, bread, and dairy products it rescued from the event, as well as food salvaged from Sunday night's game at Ford Field, to its more than 400 partnering agencies.

"That's the momentum we need," said Gleaners President Augie Fernandes. "Special events come and go, but we're going to continue to do this, thanks to the support of this community."

Contact **SHABINA S. KHATRI** at 586-469-8087 or skhatri@freepress.com.

Area native takes local reins for Dept. of Human Services

Elizabeth Huff, Staff Writer
Hillsdale.net
January 31, 2006

A huge responsibility has been passed to Shaun Culp, recently appointed director of the Department of Human Services for Hillsdale and Branch counties. Born in Hillsdale and raised in Coldwater, Culp is excited to return to his hometowns.

The department's mission is to assist children, families, and vulnerable adults to be safe, stable and self-supporting. Culp will oversee the administration of federal cash assistance and food assistance programs, as well as child welfare and adult service programs for Hillsdale and Branch counties.

The DHS helped 4,864 people in Hillsdale County in November alone. Total assistance payments were more than \$535,000 excluding Medicaid.

Besides undergoing director training and getting familiar with the counties, the most pressing issue for Culp is the efficient allocation of staff.

With about 75 staff members under his supervision and facing severe staffing cuts this year, Culp said that his, "first order of business now is looking into what we've just been allocated in terms of staffing, and to try to optimize our functioning within those allowances and limitations."

Although he will have to make some tough restructuring decisions, he intends to "find every creative way possible to retain staff here in the counties."

Over the next several weeks, Culp will try to bring a fresh look to the state of counties' welfare services. He hopes to continue the programs that work well and improve those that are not.

Culp graduated from the University of Michigan in 1991, and he began his career with the Department of Social Services in Washtenaw County in 1992.

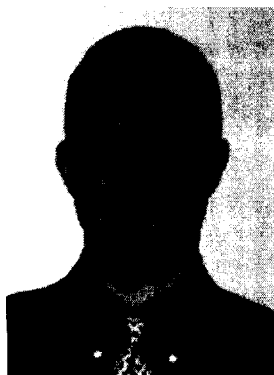
From there he transferred to Kalamazoo County, where he worked for three years as a child protective services specialist before being promoted to Children's Services Supervisor in 1997.

In 2000, he took another promotion as a second-line Programs Manager in Barry and Eaton counties, where his duties expanded to overseeing all local office programs, including financial assistance, child welfare and adult services.

In Hillsdale and Branch counties he will have a still greater breadth to his responsibilities where his knowledge of Southern Michigan's human service programs will allow him to orchestrate the skills and strengths of his staff.

State DHS Director Marianne Udow said, "Shaun has demonstrated strong leadership skills throughout his 14 years as a department employee...I'm confident that, as director of the Branch/Hillsdale DHS, he will continue to provide quality leadership."

Culp said that above all, he is committed to the vision statements of the DHS to reduce poverty, to help all children have a great start in life, and to help its clients achieve their full potential.



NEW HEAD

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